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FM AMEMBASSY PHNOM PENH
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1432
INFO RUCNASE/ASEAN MEMBER COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

UNCLAS PHNOM PENH 000899

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS, DRL
STATE PASS TO USAID ASIA BUREAU

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [SOCI](#) [PGOV](#) [CB](#)
SUBJECT: PEACEFUL CELEBRATION OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS
DAY IN CAMBODIA

SENSITIVE BUT UNCLASSIFIED

¶1. (U) Cambodians in Phnom Penh celebrated a peaceful International Human Rights Day on December 10, marked by a march and a rally. This year's march is the third consecutive march allowed by authorities; in prior years, the route had been limited to approximately 4 blocks, but this year authorities permitted a 3-kilometer march from Wat Phnom, along the waterfront area to Wat Botum near the centrally located Hun Sen Park. Approximately 1,000 participants from labor unions, NGOs, community groups, and donor countries marched, then joined up with several hundred more participants at the park for a rally. Ambassador Rodley attended the rally, as did the Ambassadors from Germany and France, and the diplomatic representative from the European Union (EU). The rally included remarks by the representative of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNOHCHR), the French Ambassador, the EU representative, and several NGO leaders. Neither the Phnom Penh Municipality nor the Royal Government of Cambodia sent representatives to the march or rally.

¶2. (SBU) This year's events were organized by a working group of 19 NGOs, led by the Cambodian Human Rights Action Committee (CHRAC). Permission for the event from authorities came mid-day on December 9, which UNOHCHR representative Christophe Peschoux said was an improvement from prior years, in which permission had been denied by authorities, necessitating intervention by UNOHCHR and donor countries. Peschoux stated that permission this year was slow due to bureaucratic tangling between municipal and federal authorities, but never denied during the process, and authorities did not restrict either the route or the number of permitted participants. This permitted organizers to stage a much longer march than in previous years. Police presence around the march was light, and there was no official interference during the march.

¶3. (SBU) In comments at the rally, the president of the Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC), Thun Saray, remarked on the importance of having truly independent courts and a society free from corruption. UNOHCHR's Peschoux commented that December 10 each year is a day of celebration, marking the signing of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was enshrined as part of Cambodia's constitution in 1993.

¶4. (SBU) Additional activities for International Human Rights Day were planned throughout Cambodia's provinces, including Battambang, Siem Reap, Prey Veng, Kampot, and Kampong Cham. The Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO) separately organized visits to 75 jailed "human rights defenders," most of whom are in prison as a result of land disputes.
RODLEY